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WHAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS MAY LEARN FROM CENTERS OF ADULT EDUCATION

Submitted by

Leo J. Barry

A.B., Bates College, 1933

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

1948

Boston University
School of Education

School of Education
Gift of L. J. Barry
July 30, 1942
29725

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Roy O. Billett, Professor of Education

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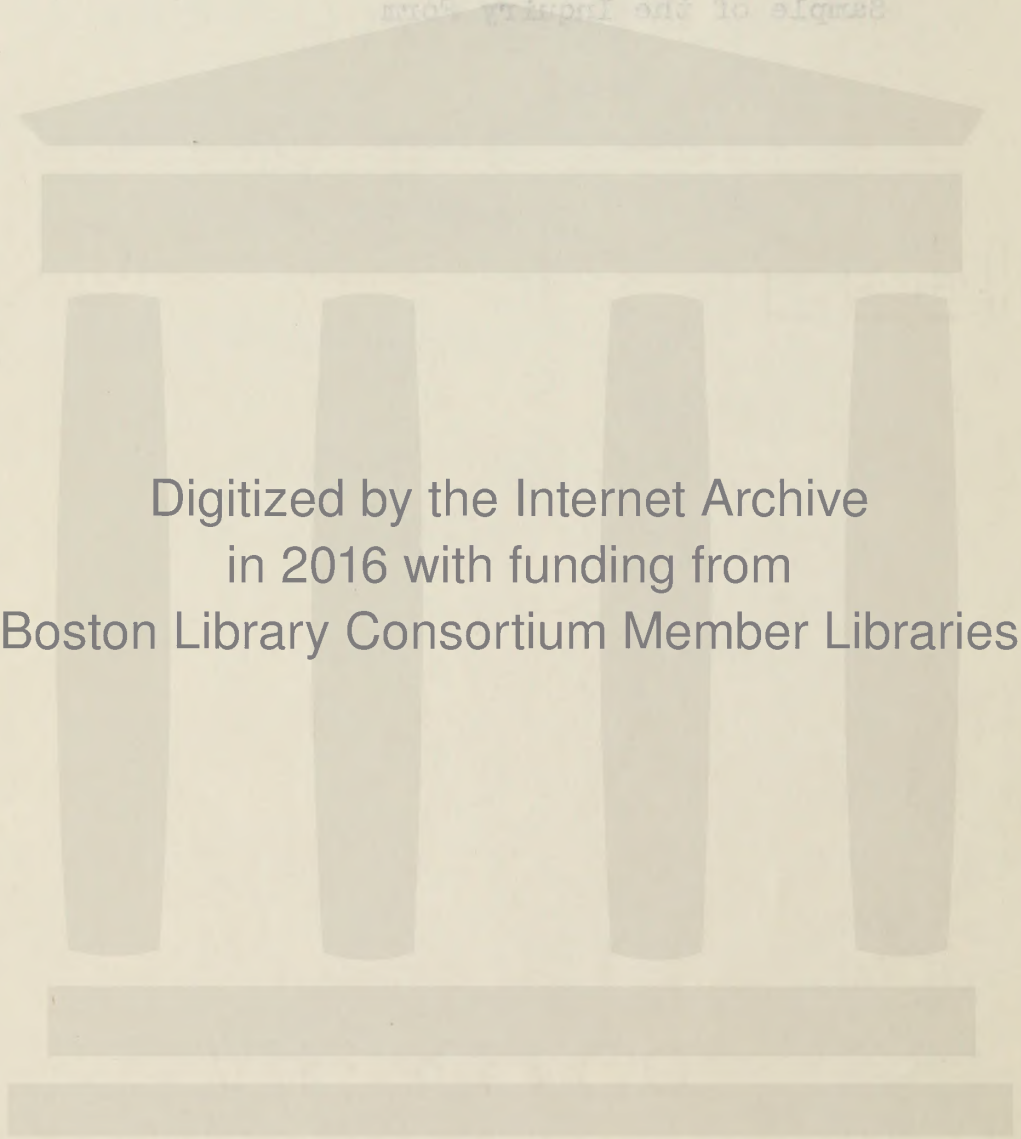

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CHAPTER I

RELATIONSHIP OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO ADULT CENTERS

The accepted function of a public school is to make available to adolescent pupils a world of knowledge and experience. Upon reaching adulthood, however, comparatively few of these pupils are ever in a position to return the favor. It is the primary concern of this Master's paper to determine what public high schools may themselves learn from the present experiences of adults now enrolled in four Greater Boston centers for adult education.

Definition of Terms

Public high schools.-- The term "public high school" is not meant to have any restricting qualifications. All types of public secondary schools to which children between the ages of twelve and eighteen are admitted represent the interests for which this study was made.

Public schools "learn".-- A public school "learns" primarily through its most responsible officials. Superintendents and principals of secondary schools generally receive their training and experience under the guidance of professional educators whose adult lives have been devoted

mainly to academic affairs. This study concerns the contribution which non-educators can make to those responsible for the administration of public schools.

Present adult experiences.-- By "the present experiences of adults" is meant only those experiences in adult education which become relevant in any way to the functioning of public high schools.

Greater Boston adult centers.-- The phrase "center of adult education" is a title generally adopted by a few New England institutions of learning which do not require any formal academic preparation for admission and where a great variety of part time or short term courses may be taken by adults. The Greater Boston centers included in this study are located in Cambridge, Boston, and Newton, Massachusetts, each serving members generally within a radius of twenty miles. A detailed account of each of these centers is found in the early pages of Chapter II.

Adult education.-- No phase of education is easy to define. Adult education, self-explanatory as the term obviously is, becomes no exception. Lyman Bryson,1/ a former president of the American Association for Adult Education, says that it "embraces whatever help in living can be got

1/ Lyman Bryson, "What We Mean By Adult Education," Handbook of Adult Education in the United States, Institute of Adult Education, Columbia University, New York, 1948 p. 4.

from the recorded or communicated experiences of others. It is education for everybody at all times and in all conditions." Three other adult education specialists[1] agreed that it concerns "provision of opportunities for continuous intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth on the part of the individual to the end that he may function more capably and more happily as a member of a cooperative democratic society."

Study Limited to One Phase of Adult Education

Basis of limitation.-- In determining the contribution that adult education could make to public school education, it was necessary to consider all existing agencies for adult learning. Obviously these are many. Also, their contributions are diverse and complex. Dr. Morse A. Cartwright[2], Director of the American Association for Adult Education, says this of the situation:

> In a country as large as the United States of America, where adult education appears in myriad forms and is presented through uncounted thousands of agencies large and small, it is quite outside human limitations to set forth an inclusive, detailed account of adult education activity. It is almost as difficult to present, in cross section as it were, a true picture in the requisite detail of the countless ways, formal and informal, in which Americans in the conduct of their daily lives go about the business of informing and of educating themselves the better to carry on their

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1/ F. W. Reeves, T. Fansler, and C. O. Houle, Adult Education (Regents' Inquiry), McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York, 1938, p. 94.

2/ Handbook of Adult Education in the United States, Op. cit., p. xi.

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functions as citizens in a representative democracy and as the creators of an American and in part world culture.

In view of this great range of adult educational experience, it was decided that only that source which was related directly to the objectives, methods, and results of public schools would be used in this study.

Public schools are already learning much, undoubtedly, from the educational experiences of adults. Every school has opportunity to acquire valuable information yearly from at least two sources; and a large number of schools, from still a third source.

These sources are

1. The success or failure of the school's graduates as they move on to higher institutions of learning.
2. Community participation by adults in the school's affairs throughout the year.
3. The school's actual experience with its own adult education programs.

Although there is little doubt that more and more schools are aware of the values provided by these three sources, several limitations exist. Few schools can maintain a follow-up program which will give any substantial educational returns on the experiences of their graduates, limited as such returns usually are to mere success or failure in college. Community participation in school affairs, ideal as it unquestionably is, makes merely an indirect contribution to the thinking of the school, and at best is most difficult to

evaluate educationally. The third source, offering the closest to a practical possibility for "learning," has the restriction of usually being thought of as a part of the whole school program and is seldom viewed objectively.

Actually all three sources are too close to the program of a given school. It becomes too easy a matter for the school to negate, rationalize, or overshadow its sources of information.

A fourth source of information.-- Thus, this Master's paper attempts to present to public schools a fourth source of information, an avenue not entirely under the influence of any given school, yet close enough to the ambitions of every school to make its contribution of practical value. Such a source is the independent center for adult education to be found in the cities of Cambridge and Boston. For the purposes of this study both the Cambridge and the Boston Centers were used, where the educational experiences of adults might be freely and objectively considered. Then, for the purposes of comparison, two more centers - one under the auspices of the state, the other chiefly under public school control - were included.

These four New England centers for adult education, located within a five mile radius of Boston, offer a continuous opportunity for public schools within the area to benefit from the experiences of all adult members.

Statement of Background Research

A preface to research.-- Some public schools have already indicated a wish to take their place in the complex scheme of adult learning in the United States. The 1948 edition of the Handbook of Adult Education in the United States[1] informs us that

> A final and very important proof of progress is the willingness of public schools to work along with other community adult education groups and to accept a residual responsibility that would include an evaluation of the adequacy of the adult education program as a whole.

Just as public schools have indicated their willingness to cooperate so too have the various state departments of education, operating under benefit of state legislation. A study of such legislation in Massachusetts[2] within the last decade makes interesting reading:

> 1936 - Commonwealth provides fifty per cent of cost of supervision and instruction in adult alien education and vocation classes.
> 1946 - Provides a variety of state-supported adult education services, including correspondence courses, university extension, radio programs, visual instruction, and lecture service. For this work, annual appropriations are granted by the State Legislature. Fees paid for university extension and correspondence courses nearly meet the cost of these services. During the year 1945-1946 the Legislature made appropriation of $77,780 for adult civic education. The Commonwealth bears one

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1/ Thomas A. Van Sant, "Public School Adult Education Programs," Op. cit., p. 199.
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1/ Thomas A. Van Sant, "Public School Adult Education Programs," Op. cit., p. 198.
2/ Handbook of Adult Education in the United States, Op. cit., pp. 208-7.

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However, the Handbook of Adult Education in the United States[1] also clearly establishes that public school programs of adult education do not remain the concern of professional educators alone.

> No longer are public school programs the concern of professional educators only. Adult education councils of various types - neighborhood, community, city-wide, state-wide - are springing up and blossoming everywhere: in rural and urban communities; in favored and less favored areas. These councils are concerned with adult education - the education of all adults - because intelligent, public-spirited men and women see today more clearly than ever before that it is the adults who set the pace and stamp the pattern of life in every community.

No related studies found.-- In the area of this study no comparable research was found. Neither the standard bibliographies of research studies nor the manuals of adult education, including the current Handbook of Adult Education in the United States, offered information on similar studies. The great bulk of material available on the subject of adult education stressed the contribution that public school systems could make to furthering interest in adult study, but none was found to reveal the contribution that members of adult centers

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Letters of appeal were sent to Mr. Homer Kempfer, Specialist for General Adult and Post-High School Education, U. S. Office of Education, and to Miss Mary Ely, Research Associate, in the office of the American Association for Adult Education. Although neither could supply any direct information on comparable research, each contributed a list of additional bibliographical materials for this study.

Despite the dearth of related studies, out of the current journals and writings on the subject of adult education there emerged an attitude - concerning the status of adult learning in the United States - which in itself offers a contribution to all public school educators.

A pattern of mind emerges.-- During the years of World War II it became a commonplace expression to speak of "our changing world." It was clear enough that scientific development had surpassed our social and moral progress. This thought, as an educational keynote, was sounded eloquently by James Truslow Adams.1/

> If we realize that, in our changing world, adult education is both a possibility and a necessity, that realization will in time have a profound effect on the type of education and training given in the old-fashioned school-college years. Such training and education can no longer be considered as something complete in themselves, enabling one to settle down to a more or less static life. They will have to be thought of as merely

1/ James Truslow Adams, Frontiers of American Culture, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1944, p. 143.

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a preparatory training for the constant receiving of new education demanded by a world which is constantly changing, in its gadgets, its ways of daily life, and its means of making a living, quite as much as in its means of transport.

For this new concept to gain force, however, it was felt that a public frame of mind had to be established. We are told by the former United States Commissioner of Education himself. Dr. John W. Studebaker,[1] addressing a meeting of the Department of Adult Education at Pittsburg in 1944, said:

> First of all, how can we deal with the apathy of many adults with respect to this adult type of education. It would seem that adults too frequently have left the schools with the notion that education is a formal, schoolish process which, completed once and for all, need not be continued or resumed. Without zest for continued learning, certainly for learning of any formally organized or systematic sort, some adults are too easily satisfied with only such informal and unsystematic learning as may be secured from newspapers, radio, and the like. Becoming a member of a study-discussion group and attendance at public forums requires some inner motivation - some sense of need, some conviction as to civic duty. The generation of this conviction, the motivation of adult interest in continued learning in the field of civic affairs, is the first and prime requirement.

There are, of course, educational prophets to whom this "new" frame of mind is at least a decade old. Harold Rugg[2] of Columbia wrote in 1936:

> The new conception is of a coordinated system of adult and child education reaching actively into every

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1/ John W. Studebaker, "Adult Education Under Public School Auspices," Adult Education Bulletin, (October 1944), Vol. IX, No. 1, p. 5.

2/ Harold Rugg, American Life and the School Curriculum, Ginn and Company, Boston, 1936, p. 371.

> phase of community life - home, government, industry, trade, what not. Much too long we have thought of education in the community as the work of a "school system," a separate institution "teaching" children certain facts, meanings, and principles five hours a day, five days a week, thirty-eight weeks in the year. At long last we are conceiving of a planned, unified educational system integrating all the social agencies of the community and all the people at every age-level from infancy to old age.
>
> Education does not stop at the twelfth grade or at graduation from the municipal university or even from a graduate technical school. In such a community education goes on throughout all of normal life. All life, if it is really life, is growing, and the very center of propulsion of that growth is education. "If I stop learning, I stop growing, and I die."

Sometime earlier Ruth Kotinsky[1] had referred to an attitude toward "schooling" which often made adult learning a prohibitive venture.

> By ceasing to be disparate with life, schooling will cease to impose handicaps on adult education. As it now stands, it deprives adults of a sense of reality and usefulness in school learning. If it prepares them for making a living at all, it is for occupying a previously finished niche. Further, once it is over, it leaves a long gap before beginning to supply "adult" education, and so makes the beginning of that undertaking a more difficult venture. Possibly worse than any of these is the tendency, more or less conscious, toward the maintenance of the status quo - preparation for fitting into a shiftless world rather than girding up powers to control it.

In even more vigorous language Miss Kotinsky[2] pointed to the need for vital cooperation between the agencies for adult and adolescent education.

1/ Ruth Kotinsky, Adult Education and the Social Scene, Appleton-Century Company, New York, 1933, p. 45.
2/ Op. cit., p. 115.

> First as to the role that the new movement should play in remaking the schools for younger people. It is immediately apparent that no separate study has been made. The reason may be that a new movement is too overwhelmed with its own problems. On the other hand, it is clear that earlier schooling is one of the conditions of the success or failure of adult education; in education, as in no other field, the child is parent of the man. Further, the world adults are now facing is the kind of world made in part by the kind of persons formed or left unformed by present school processes, and by those uneducative conditions of life which schools have left untouched. And finally, the education of the young is one of the foremost important concerns of adults, and the institutions through which it is accomplished rank among the major social edifices which they help to erect. Therefore, schooling and the education of the young offers one of the best opportunities for a genuine adult education.

Reassuring too is the fact that the educational philosophers here find their words borne out by specific experience and educational research. F. W. Reeves and others,[1] making a Regents' Inquiry survey of the state of adult education in New York discovered that

> In adult education, there is a tendency to place too much emphasis upon traditional methods, the recitation and the lecture, and not enough emphasis upon such forms as the "socialized" recitation, informal discussion techniques, "contracts", and study projects. Too frequently, reliance is placed upon textbooks; theories are not applied to living situations. Some use has been made of the community survey as a teaching device, especially in New York City, but such use is rare. The chief characteristic of one who is mature is that he is capable of directing the nature and scope of his own activities. In contrast to this principle the methods of teaching adults have been brought over from other levels where they were developed either for young, immature persons, or for full-time college students who have fewer direct contacts with life outside the classroom than do adults.

1/ Reeves and others, Op. cit., p. 132.

Here then are some of the obstacles and a few of the needs in adult education. Here are the opinions of professional educators warning the public schools to look beyond themselves for suggestions and means of growth.

This new pattern of mind has become even more clearly defined in the days following World War II. There has taken place now an emphatic change in the relationship between public school education and adult education.

Post-war signs and warnings.-- In 1940, several prominent American educators[1] in a widely used text designed for public school administrators indicated, by space allotments alone, their belief that public school responsibility to adult education was essentially one of vocational instruction. The fact that a forty-page major chapter of their findings in the area of vocational education should devote a mere half-page of one minor sub-topic to general adult education is indication of the proportion of pre-war attention given to the two areas.

By June, 1947, however, the School Executive[2] in an editorial plea for extending the use of school plants said:

> One of the greatest threats to democratic society is the difficulty which masses of the people have in understanding the intricate problems which they must solve as citizens of a "government of the people, by

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1/ Leonard V. Koos, James M. Hughes, Percival W. Hutson, and William C. Reavis, Administering the Secondary School, American Book Company, New York, 1940, p. 89.

2/ The School Executive, (June, 1947), Vol. 66, N 10, p. 12.

> the people, and for the people." Our public school system must face this great need for supplying opportunities for the continuous learning by adults. No other institutions are in a position to do this as effectively as the public schools.

Interestingly enough, the next paragraph of the same article began, "Vocational re-education is another need of modern life."

Many colleges and secondary schools throughout the United States have shown inclinations to expand or to reorganize their curricula. Seldom, though, has the way been more strongly urged than in the inaugural address of Colgate W. Darden[1/] when, on October 1, 1947, he accepted the presidency of the University of Virginia.

> The most pressing question is what is to be done for the seventy-five per cent of the high school graduates who go from high school not to college but to work. Admittedly there are among them many of demonstrated capacity and of known ambition. They go to work in most cases, because they must support themselves, and in many instances help support families. Yet, with a free ballot, there rests within their hands the political control of this country. It is reasonable to assume that, given the opportunity, they can supply a larger number of able citizens than are now supplied by the colleges and universities.
>
> Whether we are prepared to admit that place rather than contest it is of first importance in education. We should mobilize the resources of the University behind a carefully prepared program of adult education.

Those are strong words from a university president, speaking on an occasion when a plea for help to non-college

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1/ Colgate W. Darden, "The Most Pressing Question," Adult Education Journal, (January, 1948), Vol. 7, p. 14.

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students might hardly have been expected. The very title of his address, "The Most Pressing Question," must surely have made his whole theme a ridiculous gesture if uttered just a few years previously.

In New England, two large public school systems have carried the spirit of the new movement into direct action. Under a new public law of Massachusetts two public school junior colleges, at Newton and at Springfield, were established at the end of the war. They were originally conceived as an aid to veterans seeking additional preparation for college, but are now to be continued as an aid as well to those who would continue their normal education beyond the regular twelfth year of high school.

At the first commencement of a Massachusetts' public school junior college, held in the Newton High School auditorium on June 17, 1948, Dr. Kenneth C. M. Sills,[1] President of Bowdoin College, emphasized that no longer can any school - public or private - look upon its educational offerings as terminal in any sense of the word. "Education," he said, "must from now on forever be a commencement, never a conclusion."

Here, close about us, are unmistakable signs favoring extended periods of education.

1/ Based on notes taken during the commencement exercises.

Yet today professional educators are not the only ones to sense the need for haste in giving immediate priority to general adult education above the mere vocational in this post-war world. Pearl Buck[1] writes that

> We no longer have centuries in which to proceed to educate the young. It is possible that this century may be the last man has to live. It is doubtful whether we can take time to teach only the young today. It is wiser to emphasize as never before the programs of adult education, lest the adults destroy our world before the children have time to grow up in it.

In addition to implying that adult education should become a major concern for all of us today, there is the feeling - evident in the preceding quotations - that adult education will quite automatically and naturally become an extension of the present public school program. Such a development suggests the continuation of similar educational patterns and procedures.

One contemporary writer, however, has been found to offer warning. James Truslow Adams[2] in discussing adult education in a democracy says this:

> In view of the incipient movement to forbid private schools and put all education under the control of the state, a remark by the Federal Commissioner of Education, John W. Studebaker, is interesting. He wrote that "the aim of those concerned with adult education in the public school field now is to win the same status for adult education as is accorded general education." He admitted that the public remained unconverted to the idea, and the

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1/ Pearl S. Buck, "The Atmosphere of Education," National Education Association Journal, (May, 1948), Vol. 37, N 5, p. 282.

2/ Op. cit., p. 296.

idea itself is somewhat vague. We may merely note that the status of general education in the public schools (or others of equal standing) is that it is mandatory.

It is not the purpose of this paper to attempt proof that adult education should or should not become an extension of public secondary education. It is the intention of this service paper, however, to make a contribution to a side of the question that seems to be neglected in contemporary research. To date the general emphasis appears to be on what the public schools can do for adult education. In this writing it is hoped to show what adult education may do for public education.

Adult centers qualified to contribute to public education.-- As Mr. Adams suggests, the essential nature of public education is mandatory, whereas the keynote of adult education is voluntary. On that basis alone, if for no other, the present experiences of members of adult education classes should offer a contribution to administrators of public education in a democracy which devotes itself to the freedom of the individual.

Although it is generally agreed that schools and community should work closely together in educational planning, the opportunities for such collaboration are not frequently realized. Often it is difficult to determine which adults in a community have potential contributions to make.

What better groups could possibly be found, however, than those who have chosen, entirely on their own initiative and

quite without regard for formal academic credit, to continue their education beyond high school? Such groups, of course, comprise the membership in all centers of adult education.

The fact that the majority of adults in such centers are graduates of public schools means not only that they have a natural and personal background for making evaluations, but also that they represent individually the extent to which public education offers carry-over values.

The testimony then of members of adult centers of education reflects the highest level of non-professional opinion that administrators of public schools can hope to receive.

Scope of This Survey

General range of inquiry.-- In this study a total of 375 members now enrolled in the Newton Public Schools' evening adult education program, in the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, in groups of the University Extension program, and in the Boston Center for Adult Education indicated their present experiences in adult study and any relationships between such study and their previous high school education.

An inquiry form, to be returned anonymously, was given to class members at the four centers. Since each center represents a somewhat different type of student and community, a typical cross-section study of Greater Boston adult education was obtained, in addition to the data procured for

this study. In each instance the cooperation of the director of the center was secured as guarantee that only representative groups would receive inquiry forms. In addition, each director presented statements and relevant statistics concerning his own center as a backdrop against which the findings were to be interpreted.

The inquiry form divided the study into four principal phases:

1. To discover the reasons why adult study is undertaken.

2. To determine the specific factors which are considered most attractive in adult education.

3. To obtain evaluation by adult students a) of their own past experiences in public high school, b) of the relationship between such experiences and the students' present adult education, and c) of the factors influencing success in adult life.

4. To present statistical "profiles" of the people who take adult education courses today.

Machine tabulations were made of all returns, and a series of tables was constructed. The tables, arranged to represent the four principal divisions of the study, offer comparisons of the individual centers as well as the sum results of all questions asked. In this manner, indications of variations within a given community are obtained as well as a segregation of those findings common to all adult education groups.

Thus, the experiences of representative members of four large centers of adult education within the area of Greater

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Thus, the experiences of representative members of four large centers of adult education within the area of Greater

Boston have been successively collected, interpreted, and evaluated for the benefit of those concerned with the administration of public secondary schools.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA WITH POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Relative Elements in this Survey

Participants representative of their centers.-- At best, conclusions are always relative. Before any specific findings are given in this study, it is desired to state emphatically the position of all relative elements against which the value of any conclusion is to be measured.

This study concerns the opinions and judgments of students attending four centers of adult education in the area of Greater Boston. These agencies represent the two oldest and largest independent centers in the area, the single largest state-controlled adult education program, and one of the largest public school evening programs. All groups participating in this study were personally selected by the directors of the respective centers as being truly representative of their center.

By the very nature of the questions contained in the inquiry form there was no way in which "hand-picked" students could have worked to the advantage of any director or center. No questions involving the caliber or quality of instruction at any of the centers were included in the inquiry form.

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Participants ideal for this survey.-- The important concern here, however, is not only that the students selected were representative of their centers, but that the students themselves proved to be sincere, above-average adults in terms of education, occupation, and purpose, as noted in their educational "profiles". These students are considered "ideal", and hence typical of adults who can best make a contribution to the thinking of public schools, on the basis that the vast majority of them are self-motivated and eager to improve their general, not necessarily specialized, education without the sometimes artificial need for winning academic credit or degree.

That the centers in which these students seek to improve themselves are truly liberal is attested to in Chapter I by the very philosophy of their methods of admission and the organization and conduct of their courses.

Throughout the drawing of conclusions, then, the significant point is not that participants in this survey are adults or high school graduates or college graduates, but that they are superior adults now enrolled in centers for general adult education. Especially is it important that this group took voluntary part in this study with the specific purpose of making a contribution to the thinking of public schools.

In this chapter, also, it should be noted that additional variables - of education, age, or sex - may be included as a supplement to the basic data supplied by the tables given in

Chapter III. All of these additional statistics were also procured by International Business Machine tabulations, but were withheld from inclusion in the preceding tables in the interest of clarity and readability.

Public Schools Need to Understand Adult Education

A preface to conclusion.-- Perhaps the very first contribution that centers for adult education can make to public schools is to present themselves in sufficient detail to be properly recognized for what they are.

The report of a Regents' Inquiry[1] into adult education, published in 1938, names as the principal obstacle to progress in adult education the "lack of understanding on the part of educators of what adult education means." Also the National Education Association[2] lists as a final point of need in the area of an improved program in social studies the giving of greater attention by public schools to the whole area of adult education.

> Many of the difficulties encountered by adults, especially in the early years after schooling, are encountered partly because of unfamiliarity with the possibilities and agencies of adult education. The continuous character of education warrants an intensive study of the ways and means of adult education at a time when the pupil is on the verge of leaving school.

1/ F. W. Reeves, Op. cit., p. 140.

2/ National Education Association, Department of Superintendence, The Social Studies Curriculum, Fourteenth Yearbook, p. 159.

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Professional educators have very naturally long been concerned with the formal type of degree-granting education characteristic of their own preparation. They have looked to the colleges and to the graduate schools of education for counsel and advice as a kind of educational heritage. When the general public has been consulted at all, it has been in a local and indirect fashion. This is natural enough, for public educational thinking in any community is a complex, elusive quality. Suggestions from colleges and graduate schools were certainly more accessible and doubtless, in large measure, more reliable.

As seen in Chapter I, however public interest in general education, especially through agencies for adult learning, is opening a new source for the thinking educator. Nevertheless his concern at the moment is largely with adult education as an extension of the public school program.

In this study it has been the intention to make available another side of adult education - the area represented by the independent centers for adult education.

CONCLUSIONS

Centers for adult education attract sincere, above-average adults who are concerned primarily with self-improvement rather than with degrees.-- Table X, representing the educational "profile" of these adult students, reveals that a total of 281, or 74.9 per cent, have had some study beyond high school and

that a total of 132, or 35.2 per cent, have had four years of college work. Such figures are considerably higher than the United States census[1] average for Massachusetts, which gives 20 per cent as having completed high school and only 5.4 per cent as having had four years of college study.

As stated in Chapter III, only nineteen of these adults are at present unemployed. Over sixty-five per cent of those employed, a total of 186 as shown in Table XII, are in business, science, religion, and the professions.

Not only is this a group of above-average adults, but it is sincere and purposeful in its determination to improve its educational status. Asked why they first decided to take adult study, as indicated in Table I, a total of 297 said the decision was made entirely on their own initiative, while only 52 followed the recommendations of others in taking courses, and 38 chose to study because friends were also interested.

The fact that earning credits or degrees is not of primary concern to this group of adults is evident from their choosing to attend centers where no such awards are made. That self-improvement is the keynote of their study is shown in the serious nature of their selection of purposes for study, as given in Table II.

1/ Sixteenth Census of the United States, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1943.

Centers of adult education present a program of studies and a philosophy which are truly liberal.-- It certainly becomes important, also, for public educators to understand the reason why many adults are attracted to centers for adult education. The informal, liberal, and extremely democratic philosophy of the independent center, as previously discussed in Chapter II, becomes highly significant in this age of specialization in education. The philosophy of the four centers concerned in this study is best typified by the account of the Boston Center in the 1948 Handbook of Adult Education in the United States as quoted in Chapter II.

The principal interests of students attending centers of adult education are extensive and practical in character.-- Possibly the first question public school educators would ask about these adult students would concern the benefits they expected to receive from their study in the adult centers. Table II shows the extensive and practical character of the answers given by members of all centers. The most popular reason, to "learn something missed in previous education," became the first choice of three centers and the second choice of University Extension members.

The fact that University Extension members should give this reason as second to the item of becoming more efficient in present employment undoubtedly represents one of the fundamental differences between those enrolled in the state-controlled center and those attending the independent centers.

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The implication would seem to be that the more standardized type of course at the University Extension center would have more appeal to those seeking improvement in work skills than would the flexible makeup of courses at the Cambridge or Boston Centers.

Remembering that most of these adult students have had something above an average education, it becomes significant indeed that the majority should be concerned with "something missed in previous education." Obviously neither high schools nor colleges offered sufficiently broad curricula to satisfy the needs of those determined upon self-improvement. This becomes apparent from the number of college graduates as well as non-college graduates who listed this item as a principal choice.

Out of a possible 132 college graduates, 77 - or well over fifty per cent - named this item; while in the non-college group just under one half - a total of 113 out of a possible 249 - made the same selection.

Important, too, is the fact that the first choice of these adults concerned something missed in previous education as against something only partially learned. This point is made evident from the comparatively low standing of item five, in Table II, which relates to brushing up on subjects already studied.

A lament often brought to the ears of educators today is that schools are spreading themselves too thin, that they are

neglecting the fundamentals and offering such a wide smattering of courses that children emerge from the schoolhouse "knowing a little of everything and not much of anything."

Public educators may find comfort in the fact that the chief concern of the adults represented in this study was for something missed in previous education rather than for something improperly learned.

Although the principal reason for undertaking adult study, as given by those surveyed, might seem to indicate merely an educational curiosity, a desire to see what certain subjects were all about, the next highest selections obviate such a possibility. The basis for this statement is that those completing the inquiry forms were free to designate as many choices in this question as they wished. The "practical" element is evident in the high ranking of items two and seven of Table II (totalling even higher than choice one). This emphasis on becoming more efficient in present employment and in keeping up to date would be excellent justification for public educators to look upon study in adult centers as professionally significant, something considerably above mere "leisure time" or "hobby" interests. It might also indicate that great numbers of other serious-minded adults, not presently enrolled in adult centers, must have similar educational needs.

Members of adult centers are most interested in those fields of study not generally considered as major subjects in

the high school curriculum.-- Having determined those surveyed to be responsible adults, earnestly concerned with their own educational development, public school administrators would certainly be eager to find out what subject fields attracted these mature students. For example, what did these adults who "missed something" from previous education choose to study in the adult centers?

This variable is obtained from a follow-up of item four in column two of the inquiry form as measured against answers given by these students in column thirty-eight. Crafts, music, homemaking, business, art, language, and current affairs ranked in that order with no appreciable differences between any two - except for crafts, which was almost two to one as the first choice.

This pattern of results indicated by those who missed something from previous education, it will be noted, is very similar to the total choices indicated for all students in Table XI.

Here then are the specific subject areas in which high schools and colleges attended by these adults failed to satisfy a need. It is readily seen that a number of these popular subjects are not of the type to be classed often as major studies in high school. For those schools which are gradually breaking away from the traditional "curricula" patterns, here is adult approval of the truly liberal or broad make-up of study programs.

Members of adult centers believe that social maturity and age are most responsible for changing a student's attitude toward study.-- In the inquiry form students were asked if they recalled any subject disliked in high school which in adult study proved to be interesting. One hundred and thirty-eight adults indicated, in item four of Table VI, that they had had just such an experience.

Reasons given for this change of heart are shown in Table VII. It is readily seen that these adult students credited no one item with being chiefly responsible for the change. Close examination, however, reveals that present age and social maturity, in combination, outstrip the element of "method" of teaching" and "the teacher".

Here is thought for the adult educator, also. For although great stress is often placed upon the informal, individualized methods of instruction featured by the centers, comparatively few students in this study related their change of attitude to any variation in teaching method. Rather, the students seem convinced that age and social maturity - which are obviously closely related - are the factors mainly influencing their educational attitudes.

Members of adult centers objected more frequently, in retrospect, to teaching methods encountered in high school than to the teachers themselves.-- For whatever comfort it may bring the public school teacher, he is recalled with disfavor

less frequently than are his methods of teaching. Table VII again produced the evidence for such a statement. Not only are the totals of fifty-eight in item six, as against thirty-five in item four, considered the determining factor, but the clear consistency of feeling in all centers (except for the minor reversal of one vote in the Boston group) gives emphasis to the total results.

Again in the interest of the classroom teacher, it was discovered in the breakdown of variables that the men as well as the women were in agreement: dislike of high school subject matter is less the fault of the teacher than his teaching methods. Neither item, it must be emphasized however, played an outstandingly large role in the total votes recorded in Table VII.

Neither the social aspects of adult education nor a review of previous studies is of more than secondary importance in adult centers.-- In Table II it is seen that item five, concerning a review of subjects previously studied, has a total of only 77 votes, or slightly less than ten per cent of the 763 cast.

The social aspects of study at the adult centers, represented by items 8, 9, and 0, come to a total of 150, or less than twenty per cent of the total interest shown in adult study.

Students seldom attend adult centers as a means of procuring employment or of passing the time.-- Here it is seen that a distinction is made between finding employment or

finding new employment as against becoming more efficient in present employment, as evident in items one and three in comparison to item two of Table II.

It is revealed that a total of only twenty-seven out of a possible 763 adults looked toward study at adult centers as a possible means of procuring employment.

Although it has been recorded already that only nineteen participants in the study were actually unemployed, it should also be remembered that the very great majority of those employed earn only between $2000 and $3900 a year, according to figures shown in Table XIII.

On this basis it might well be expected that a much larger number than twelve would have prospects of new employment as a possible reason for attendance at the centers. Clearly the indication is that these adults do not associate study at adult centers with job-seeking.

In the same table only twenty-six attributed their presence at any center to a desire to "pass the time". This figure represents less than five per cent of all votes cast.

The majority of students in adult centers say they would not be opposed to having certain characteristics of public school routine brought into adult education.-- Table III serves as the basis for all conclusions reached in this section.

By well over a two to one majority, members at all three centers agreed, in item one, that having examinations required at the end of each term would not be prohibitive.

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Item five indicates consistent agreement, by a margin of 205 to 65, that traveling a distance of five miles to reach the center would not lessen their interest in adult study.

Item seven shows that despite the fact that they are not seeking educational credit themselves, the great majority, 226 as against 43, would not object to its inclusion in adult education. Another strong majority, as indicated by a contrast of 203 to 67 in item eight, would have no objection if outside study were required.

An overwhelming majority, 234 against 50 in item nine, would not mind at all if they had to attend a certain percentage of class meetings.

One hundred and seventy-nine against 96 indicated in item twelve that they would not care if their standing in the class was made known to others at the end of the course.

A closer majority, however, in item thirteen - a total of 144 against 127 - would be willing to have class enrollments extended to thirty. In this instance it is seen that although Newton members are clearly not opposed to the idea, Cambridge is mildly opposed, while the Boston group is decidedly against the thought of larger class size.

Many items listed above, it should be noted, are in accepted practice in the University Extension groups not represented in Table III.

These conclusions might well be interpreted, it could be supposed, as a victory for certain traditional practices of the

public schools versus the boasted freedoms of study at the adult centers. At least it might be said justly that serious-minded adults do not look back upon certain rigors of public school life as unbearable in comparison to the less restricting atmosphere of adult education.

The majority of students in adult centers would oppose some characteristics of public school and college procedure if introduced into adult education.-- Table III also serves as a basis for conclusions reached in this section.

One hundred and sixty-one adults out of a possible 261, in item ten, said that they would not continue to take adult education courses if certain subjects were required of everyone. All centers were in agreement on this point.

One hundred and thirty-eight would drop adult study if entrance examinations were required, although 127 would not object, as revealed in item eleven. Here too the centers were in agreement, but the Cambridge groups differed by only one vote.

In item fourteen although the majority of members were against having formal lectures as standard procedure at their center, by a vote of 138 to 127, both men and women members of the Newton group indicated by a slight majority that they would not object. However, item fifteen shows emphatically that members of all centers would not want classes conducted in formal recitation style.

The findings in this section have more meaning possibly in relation to existing conditions in colleges than they do to high schools, although they might well have significance to some of the latter. The last two items mentioned - formal lectures and formal class recitation - certainly should have meaning to many teachers. Adults may not care for such practices, possibly because they were subjected as youngsters to the unnecessary formality of certain "traditional" high schools.

Members of adult centers believe that high school studies proved more worth-while after graduation than the friendships, social activities, or sports of high school days.-- Table V shows that 306 out of 632 members, or 48.4 per cent, named high school studies as having had more worth to them later on than did high school friendships (with a total of only 31 per cent), or sports (with 11 per cent), or social activities (with but 4 per cent).

In the present expansion of high school curricula, it might be the concern of administrators to see that so-called extra-curricula activities are not too often completely unrelated to subject fields or to learning experiences.

Many serious-minded adults, it is apparent, do not subscribe to the adage that, "It isn't what you know; it's who you know that counts." Perhaps more young people need to realize what experienced adults think in such matters.

Members of adult centers believe that success in life is dependent chiefly upon education, personality, hard work, and self-confidence, in the order named.-- Again all centers revealed high consistency in their choice of replies, as given in Table IX. Education, personality, hard work, and self-confidence, they believe, far outweigh appearance, courage, friendships, travel, and - alas - honesty, as the factors contributing most to the attaining of success in adult life.

Here it is interesting to see that members of the Cambridge Center varied by a vote of 44 to 41 in actually preferring personality to education as their number one choice, while Newton members preferred education by the slim margin of six votes.

Obviously it must be the feeling of these above-average adults that education should not be too far separated from personality in the game of life. Yet how indirectly is personality the subject of instruction in any public high school in contrast to the emphasis given to traditional subject matter.

Members of adult centers are well satisfied with the training in citizenship and in the preparation for advanced study which they received in high school.-- By consistent and overwhelming majorities, as shown in Table IV, members of adult classes are well satisfied with the training in citizenship and in the preparation for advanced study which they received in high school.

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For the public school educator, concerned with administering the only formal training in citizenship that the majority of his students will ever receive, such testimony may be welcome.

Although this study does not concern the quality of citizenship being taught in the average high school, it does become evident that if public educators themselves should not be satisfied with the caliber of citizenship training in public schools, then they undoubtedly have before them the immediate task of converting many superior adults to their point of view.

Perhaps this very thought suggests that any improvement in a school's program of studies must be preceded by education of the community's adults to the point where they recognize a need when it exists.

If members of adult centers were back in high school today, the majority of them would take the same course again, and a vast majority would study harder than before and be equally concerned about the marks they received.-- Table VI supplies the evidence for the fact that 240 out of 335 members of adult classes, or 68.3 per cent, would take the same course again if repeating high school today. Even greater numbers, or 73 per cent, would study harder, and 85 per cent would be as concerned as ever about the marks they received.

Since most adults doubtless took their high school study in days when choice of course was a comparatively limited

matter, it probably is not surprising that they should have selected the course now considered best for them. This constitutes but negative praise for the guidance program of their high school days.

What is of concern, however, is the relatively high per cent (31.7) of adults who would not take the same course again. The public educator, remembering that the group of adults represented here is of high quality, has the right to wonder if present guidance programs can boast a better percentage in high schools as complex as ours of today.

That such high majorities of these adults would study even harder than before and be equally concerned about marks received is possibly not surprising. The fact serves, however, as possible reassurance that great numbers did not find high school experiences particularly distasteful or matters of little consequence.

Evaluation of the Survey and Thoughts for Future Research

The construction and administration of the inquiry form used in this survey are explained in detail in the latter part of Chapter II.

Several factors in particular have contributed to the accomplishment of this survey:

1. Great care was used in the construction and administration of the inquiry form.
2. All findings are based on the opinions and judgments of four groups of adults especially well-qualified to contribute to the study.
3. The groups participating in the study represented four different types of centers in four separate communities, thereby offering a natural set of comparison, contrasts, and counter-checks for validity and reliability.
4. The directors of the centers participated in the administration of the inquiry form.
5. International Business Machine sorting cards were used in the tabulation of results.

As in all studies, however, possibilities for improvement exist.

Opinions and judgments more nearly approach "facts" when some means of follow-up serves as verification of findings made. Such a follow-up, in the form of a re-taking of the inquiry survey by all participants, would be most difficult to achieve in this type of study, but would be very rewarding.

The use of personal interview, as a supplement to the

inquiry form, would also be most helpful. Such a procedure, in view of the number of participants, would be so time consuming as to be almost prohibitive, however.

Possibly, as suggested by Miss Dorothy Hewitt, Director of the Boston Center for Adult Education, participants could be permitted to write out in statement form their complete opinion on all subjects under discussion. Again this procedure would entail many weeks of compilation and classification of data by a working committee.

Another such survey, on a more intensive plane, might wish to confine questions to one particular phase or subject-matter field of high schools, and thus get a more detailed analysis of one specific rather than the broader concept sought in this study.

CHAPTER V

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APPENDIX

Sample of the Inquiry Form

In the following pages a sample of the inquiry form used in this study is presented. Included, as the title page of the inquiry form, is the message TO MEMBERS OF ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES. Since all forms were distributed by the respective directors of the centers included in the survey, this message served as a covering letter.

It should also be noted that the rather unusual arrangement of column designations along the margin of the inquiry form - in place of the more standard Roman and Arabic designations - was made at the request of International Business Machine representatives. It was their belief that the use of column designations would greatly reduce the possibility of error in the final machine tabulations.

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TO MEMBERS OF ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES

Public secondary schools everywhere are seeking recommendations from adults for the improvement of present programs of education.

Men and women who enroll in courses in adult education today are among those whose mature experiences and observations have much to offer the young people in our public schools.

This inquiry form is submitted to you in the hope that you will be willing to indicate your impressions concerning your own high school and adult study. You are not asked to sign your name or to do any writing; all answers are to be given merely by encircling the appropriate number or word from among a variety of choices. You need not spend over twenty minutes.

This form has been prepared by a Newton High School teacher under the direction of Dr. Roy O. Billet, Professor of Education at Boston University, and is being given to class members of three Greater Boston Centers of Adult Education. A table of findings will be available during the summer at your Center.

I

Reasons For Undertaking Adult Study

(col. 1) Please indicate why you first decided to take adult study. (Encircle appropriate number below.)

1. Because friends were also interested
2. Entirely on your own initiative
3. On the recommendation of others

(col. 2) Indicate why you believe that adult education will help you. (One or more numbers may be encircled here.)

1. Find employment
2. Become more efficient in your present employment
3. Find other employment
4. Learn something missed in previous education
5. Brush up on subjects already studied
6. Help pass the time
7. Keep up to date
8. Meet other people
9. Have some fun
0. Be with your friends
x. Become an American citizen
y. Other reasons (please indicate)_____

II

Factors Considered Most Attractive In Adult Education

Would you still take adult education courses if the following conditions existed?
(Encircle "yes" or "no" in each case.)

	(1)	(2)	
(col.3)	Yes	No	Examinations were required at the end of each term
(col.4)	Yes	No	Each course cost you a dollar more
(col.5)	Yes	No	Each course cost you five dollars more
(col.6)	Yes	No	Each cost double what you are now paying
(col.7)	Yes	No	You had to travel five miles to reach the Center
(col.8)	Yes	No	You had to travel ten miles
(col.9)	Yes	No	Educational credits or units were awarded
(col.10)	Yes	No	Outside study was required
(col.11)	Yes	No	You had to attend a certain percentage of meetings
(col.12)	Yes	No	Certain subjects were required of everyone
(col.13)	Yes	No	Entrance examinations were required
(col.14)	Yes	No	Your standing in the class was made known to the other members at the end of the course
(col.15)	Yes	No	Each course had an enrollment of at least thirty
(col.16)	Yes	No	Courses were conducted as formal lectures
(col.17)	Yes	No	Courses were conducted in formal recitation style
(col.18)	Yes	No	You had to sign up for a full year
(col.19)	Yes	No	You had to sign up for more than one term

If you answered "No" to more than one question in the section above, place a large "X" beside the "No" that you would like to have considered your most emphatic.

III

Relationship between Education and Success in Life

Do you believe that on graduation from high school you were prepared

(1) (2)

(col.20) Yes-No To be a good citizen?
(col.21) Yes-No To go on to another school of higher education?
(col.22) Yes-No To get the job you wanted at that time?

(col.23) Which of the following phases of your high school life proved to be the most worthwhile to you after graduation? (Encircle any two of the four numbers below.)

1. Studies
2. Friendships
3. Sports
4. Social activities

(col.24) If you were repeating high school today, would you take the same course again? Yes-No

(col.25) Would you study harder than you did before? Yes-No

(col.26) Would you be as concerned about the marks you received? Yes-No

(col.27) Do you recall any subject disliked by you in high school which you have since re-studied as an adult and found interesting? Yes-No

(col.28) If your answer is "Yes" to the question above, indicate any of the items following which you consider responsible for your change in attitude.

1. Your present age
2. Your social maturity
3. Circumstances of your present employment
4. The teacher
5. Freedom from worry over exams, credits, or failure
6. Methods of teaching
7. Shorter length of adult courses

Do you think high schools should adopt any of those features generally characteristic of adult education courses? (Answer each part.)

(Col.29) Yes-No Short term courses
(col.30) Yes-No Informal classroom procedure
(col.31) Yes-No Omission of competitive marking scale
(col.32) Yes-No Omission of home study

(col.33) Which of the following factors do you think contribute most to the attaining of success in adult life? (Encircle any two)

1. Travel	4. Personality	7. Friendships
2. Education	5. Appearance	8. Hard work
3. Honesty	6. Courage	9. Self-confidence

IV

Your Educational "Profile"

(col.34) Sex: 1. Male 2. Female

(col.35) Age group: 1.(20-29) 2.(30-39) 3.(40-49) 4.(50-above)

(col.36) Marital status: 1.Single 2.Married 3.Widowed 4.Divorced

(col.37) Your education includes: (Encircle most advanced study)

1. elementary school
2. high school
3. study beyond high school
4. college (4 years)

(col.38) In which of the following fields are you now taking adult education courses?

1. Language
2. Crafts
3. Music
4. Business
5. Current affairs
6. Home-making
7. Art
8. Literature
9. Dancing
10. Other - (please indicate) _____

(col.39) Employment status:

1. Employed 2. Seeking employment 3. At home

(col.40) If employed, are you in business for yourself? Yes-No

(col.41) In what field are you employed?

1. Business
2. Science
3. Mechanics
4. A profession
5. Religion
6. Other _____

(col.42) Your income is generally about:

1. $1900 or less
2. $2-3900
3. $4-4900
4. $5-5900
5. $6-8000
6. More

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